

**COMMISSION ON AGING
MEETING SUMMARY MINUTES**
401 Hungerford Drive
Tan Conference Room, First Floor
Rockville, Maryland
September 22, 2011

Members Present	Members Absent
Alicia Bazan-Jimenez	Morton A. Davis
Elaine Kotell Binder	Judith (Judy) Levy
Elizabeth Brooks-Evans	Nhora Murphy
Myrna Cooperstein	Marcia Pruzan
Paul Del Ponte	Beth Shapiro
Tammy Duell	
John G. Honig	Liaisons
Vivien Hsueh	Pazit Aviv – Housing Opportunities Commission
Charles (Chuck) Kauffman	Joy B. Barrow – Dept. of Transportation, Division of Transit Services
Miriam Kelty	Jeffrey Bourne – Montgomery County Recreation Department
Leslie Y. Marks	Sarah Gotbaum – Older Women’s League
Kenneth (Ken) Montgomery	Austin Heyman – Office of Community Partnerships Senior Fellow
Barbara Mulitz	Seth Morgan – Commission on People with Disabilities
Mona Negm	
Rudolph (Rudy) Oswald	Guests
Joseph Petrizzo	Paul M. Bessel – Board of Leisure World
Spencer R. Schron	Hana Godama – Intern from University of MD
John (Jack) C. Sprague	Bill Jones – Obama Care Representative of Long Term Care
Robert (Bob) W. Tiller	Jackie Simon – Housing for People with Disabilities
Judith (Judy) Welles	Phil Smakula – Recreation Department
Grace Whipple	Luke Smith – Intern from University of MD
	Janice Washington
	Staff:
	Odile Saddi
	Sharon Briggs

The Chair, Elaine Binder, opened the Commission on Aging’s (COA) meeting at 9:30 a.m. and welcomed everyone back from summer break.

COA members approved the minutes from the last meeting unanimously.

COA ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS:

- **Treasurer’s Report** – Vivien Hsueh

The current balance is \$1,493, including a donation of \$51. The COA must maintain a \$1,000 balance to avoid paying bank fees.

- **Nominating Committee**

The Nominating Committee will soon begin identifying new COA officers for one-year terms beginning in 2012, and will interview new candidates for open Commission positions beginning in December. Elaine recommended that she chair the Committee and that Vivien Hsueh and Marcia

Pruzan serve as Committee members. COA members approved this plan. The Committee will offer a slate of new COA's Officers for 2012 for a Commission vote this fall. COA officers for 2012 will assume their positions at the Holiday Meeting in December 2011. Elaine anticipates beginning the interview process for new COA members in December.

- The process for selection and appointment of candidates for the COA is confidential. The Nominating Committee will submit its recommendations for new COA members to Mr. Leggett, who will send his recommendations to the County Council for confirmation. New commissioners should expect to begin their terms in February or March 2012, pending approvals by the County Executive and County Council.

CHAIR'S REPORT

- **Handicap Parking Abuse.** Early in the summer the Commission sent a letter drafted by Judy Levy and Tammy Duell to Mr. Leggett in support of efforts by the Commission on People with Disabilities to address abuse of handicap parking. A County workgroup has been established to address this issue.
- **US Congressional Super Committee.** The Commission is finalizing a letter drafted by Paul Del Ponte and supported by the Public Policy Committee to Representative Van Hollen regarding the work of the "Super Committee."
- **Recreation and Parks Advisory Board.** Vivian Hsueh's second term on the Commission expires at the end of December 2012. The Chair asked for a volunteer to replace Vivien on the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. The Board meets monthly on Monday evenings. Vivian emphasized the importance of COA representation on this Board for ensuring that senior issues are given consideration.
- **October 2011 COA Meeting.** At the October COA meeting, Dr. Fernando Torres-Gil, a nationally known expert on aging issues and diversity, will be the guest speaker. He will focus on outreach to diverse seniors. Mr. Leggett and Uma Ahluwalia are expected to attend. The Commission thanked Mona Negm for arranging for Dr. Torres-Gil's presentation.

Budget. The County enters its budget cycle on October 1, 2011 for FY 2013. George Leventhal, Chair of the County Council's Health and Human (HHS) Services Committee, has asked all HHS-related commissions, committees and boards to submit their top two priorities to the Committee. Elaine will present the COA's priorities. At the end of the month the Department of Health and Human Services will hold a public meeting at which the COA has been asked to provide testimony. Grace Whipple will deliver the testimony on behalf of the Commission, with Judy Levy as back-up if needed. Last year's COA priorities included: frail/venerable seniors; seniors who live alone; and middle and low-income seniors in need of recreational and other programs. The Executive Committee is in the process of updating the presentation to the HHS Committee.

When the County Executive submits his budget to the County Council in the spring, the COA will review it to determine if any specific programs are at risk of significantly reduced funding. If necessary, the COA will advocate for those programs in testimony before the County Council.

- On September 19, Leslie Marks, Jack Sprague, Odile Saddi, and Elaine met with Rollin Stanley from the Park and Planning Commission about rewriting zoning regulations to consider the needs of seniors living in Montgomery County.
- After a meeting with COA last spring, Rick Nelson, Director of the Housing Department indicated that the Department will be updating County housing policy and asked for COA input. The Chair will appoint a Task Force composed of members of the Public Policy Committee and the Aging in Place Committee to follow up with Mr. Nelson. .

SUMMER STUDY REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Mental Health Summer Study – Tammy Duell and Judy Levy

The Mental Health Summer Study group had excellent representation from local organizations and County government including the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Mental Health Association, and the Commission on Health. Two distinct areas of concern emerged: 1) People with *acute* psychiatric mental illness; and 2) People with *situational* mental health issues.

The Mental Health Summer Study recommendations to the Commission were to:

- Endorse mental health as a priority and approve continuation of this important work in the Health and Wellness Committee;
- Advocate for development of programs for older adults that promote wellness and prevention including nutrition, exercise and feelings of “usefulness:”
- Advocate for funding for senior mental health and support programs and services that promote social connectedness, leisure time activities, volunteerism and intergenerational activities;
- Approve collaboration with State licensing bodies to provide information (via mail or email) to County providers related to mental health and older adults; and
- Approve collaboration with the Public Policy Committee to address the legal recommendations of the workgroup.

A motion was made and unanimously accepted to make Mental Health a COA priority for the coming year. The Health and Wellness Committee will add mental health to its agenda and follow up on the recommendations from Summer Study.

Housing Summer Study– Leslie Marks

The Summer Study addressed two specific issues: 1) Accessory Apartments, and 2) Visitability and Livability in Montgomery County. Background information was provided by the Park and Planning Commission, the Commission on People with Disabilities, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Nancy Floreen’s office, Mark Erich’s office, and a representative from the building community.

The Housing Summer Study made the following recommendations to support the County’s seniors and caregivers, which the COA approved unanimously:

- Approve housing issues for seniors in Montgomery County as a priority for the coming year.
- Support changing the zoning codes to expedite the process for creating accessory apartments in Montgomery County. (The current zoning process for approval of accessory apartments in residential zones can take one-to-two years and can cost \$75,000 or more.

- Continue to support the voluntary Design for Life program for Visitability and Livability Apartments. Visitability is no-step entry, front door and hallways wide enough for a wheelchair and access to powder room. Livability features access to a kitchen and full bathroom on the 1st floor in addition to visitability standards. The Summer Study recommends that someone from the COA become part of the *Design for Life* initiative.

The COA Chair expressed appreciation for the high level of work and thoughtfulness put into the Summer Studies and thanked the chairs and all participants for their time and effort.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Policy Committee – Bob Tiller and Jack Sprague

- A letter has been drafted to US Representative Chris Van Hollen, a member of the Congressional “Super Committee, to address specifics about the impact of budget cuts to Federal and County programs affecting Montgomery County’s seniors.
- A Fraud Prevention Seminar will be held on October 5th at Riderwood in Silver Spring. All are welcome.

The COA will hold its annual Legislative Breakfast for the Senators and Delegates in Annapolis on November 30th, 2011, at Holiday Park Senior Center in Rockville. The Public Policy Committee strongly recommends that each COA member participate. The COA should identify four-to-six issues that we care most deeply to share with our legislators. The agenda may include issues such as fraud, absentee voting, housing, and mental health, and others. We need to be able to help our legislators understand what our issues are, where the problems lie, and what needs to be done to fix them. At next month’s meeting, the Executive Committee will consider a question posed about opening the breakfast for other groups like GROWS. More details about the breakfast will be forthcoming.

Communications and Community Outreach Committee (CCOC) – Spence Schron and Judy Welles

Spence and Judy attended the Senior Sub-cabinet Workgroup on Communication led by Patrick Lacefield, Director of the Office of Public Information. The following information emerged from this meeting:

- Uma Ahluwalia and Gabe Albornoz met with the Wheaton/Kensington Chamber of Congress in May about senior issues. To date there are no plans for follow up. Patrick asked for COA assistance in developing an agenda for the Public Information Office to use in meetings with various Chambers.
- Patrick Lacefield indicated County concern that seniors are not using the 311 telephone number and that there appears to be some confusion between the 311 telephone number, which eventually gets callers to the department or office they need, and the County’s senior resource number, 240 777-3000, which is a straight link to information to seniors.
- Lack of funding for print materials continues to be a major concern affecting the County’s ability to get information to seniors and other members of the general public.

- In a review of County publications for seniors, the Committee noted that every publication looks different, and recommends uniformity in design and the use of photographs showing diversity of our senior population.

The Committee has continued its discussion on diversity. Believing that COA outreach to Stakeholders should be more personal, the Committee recommends that each COA member establish a personal connection with specific organizations and diverse groups with which they already work to inform them about the work of the COA and help identify areas of mutual interest.

Seniors Today (ST) Task Force – Elizabeth Brooks-Evens and Barbara Mulitz

The ST Task Force continues to look for ways to obtain feedback on the number of people watching the programs, the usefulness of the information they receive through the program, and areas of interest they would like to see addressed. The current ST show celebrates the 100th ST show, with highlights of segments over the years. Next month's show will feature Fire Safety, InterAges, and Senior Expo. Future shows will cover hearing loss, vision loss, and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program. ST shows are available both on County Cable Channel 6 and via computer from the County's senior website.

The Chair thanked Elizabeth and Barbara for taking over management of this Task Force. Marcia Pruzan, who managed it previously and continues to work closely with the Task Force. The Seniors Today Task Force meets monthly by telephone. .

Senior Health and Wellness – Tammy Duell

- Myrna Cooperstein has invited Scott Davis from the Montgomery County Police Department to the October meeting of the Health and Wellness Committee to talk about the type of education police officers receive about working with seniors, particularly those with mental health issues.
- Medical Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (MOLST) Legislation was to have become active on October 1, 2011. However, implementation of the MOLST bill will be postponed with public comments now being requested.
- Shawn Brennan and a Long Term Care Ombudsman staff person attended the MOLST ("train the trainer") training and have now become official trainers.

Aging in Place Committee – Grace Whipple

The Committee did not meet in September. When this newly formed committee started in the fall of 2010, it began considering the challenges of older adults have as they age in the community, with a heavy focus on transportation. This year the committee expects to work with the Public Policy Committee to examine current County housing policy, which is being updated.

Approval of Draft Senior Agenda – Elaine Binder, Chair

At this year's COA Annual Meeting, the Commission considered the critical elements Montgomery County would need to be a *Community for a Lifetime*, where older adults can live safe, healthy, and vital lives.

Over the summer a small group worked on a draft Senior Agenda that has been reviewed by the Executive Committee. With COA approval, it will be sent to Uma Ahluwalia, HHS Director and Gabe

Alvarez, Director of the Recreation Department. The Chair intends to meet with both Directors to determine how to move the Agenda through the Senior Sub-cabinet to become County policy.

COA Members made the following comments:

- Safety and security is out of balance; for example, group homes are inspected only once a year; and their security requirements should be given increased attention.
- There is a need for a communication plan similar to the *Call to Action* that is a vision and guidepost for future years.

A motion from the Chair for approval of the Senior Agenda was accepted. The Chair asked that Commissioners not discuss the document until she can meet with Uma and Gabe in October.

LIAISONS REPORTS

• Housing Opportunities Commission – Pazit Aviv

The Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) is collaborating with the University of Maryland School of Nursing. The University is sending nurses to three of its sites for a communication practicum that includes home visits, high blood pressure checks, education, and exercise classes.

Holy Cross Hospital is a recipient of a State grant to reach out to minorities. For some time, the hospital has been involved with the Asian American Health Initiative, the African American Health Initiative, and the Rockcreek Community Latino Health Initiative Outreach. The HOC will become an additional group in the near future. This program enables health promotion volunteers and health providers to go into the community with an understanding of the relevant cultures.

Outcomes of the Fall Prevention Meeting:

- Steve Galen is the CEO President of Primary Care Coalition, which operates the Community Health Clinics. The Commission had discussed a joint project on falls prevention with the Coalition, but that effort is now being undertaken with HOC and Holy Cross Hospital.
- The Montgomery County Senior Nutrition Program is seeking to increase congregate lunch program sites with HOC.

Commission on People with Disabilities – Seth Morgan

The Commission on People with Disabilities (CPD) is the very early stage of planning its current program including its ongoing employment initiative. The COA's work and areas of interest are closely mirrored in the work of the CPD, including issues related to housing and transportation.

On behalf of himself and the CPD, Seth thanked the COA for its letter of support to Mr. Leggett regarding parking availability for people with disabilities. The CPD's most recent meeting with Mr. Leggett's office representative was early in September. There are plans for a public education effort tentatively called "Respect the Space," which will focus on the need for accessible parking.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) – FEMA will hold its first nation-wide emergency test on November 9th 2:00 p.m.

Department of Transportation (DOT), Division of Transit Services – Joy Barrow

The *Call 'N Ride* Program is not an escort transportation program, but rather a program providing subsidized rides for those who qualify. There currently are 700 users. By the end of the year DOT expects to create a debit swipe card that will replace vouchers and will include the rider's photograph. Please contact Joy at 240-777-5895 with any concerns about Ride-on Services or the transportation program in general. Call 301-948-5409 to get a photo identification card.

Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRC) – Jeff Bourne and Phil Smakula

Phil Smakula is with the Recreation Department Senior Services. His direct phone number is 240-777-4992.

The Montgomery County Recreation Department is working to return the Neighborhood Senior Center Programs, which were cut a year ago due to budget interruptions. The Department has been able to move some funds in the current year and to reinstitute several programs. In addition, the Department is beginning to reintroduce some adult leisure and recreation programs.

Kudos go to local hospitals, which are partnering with MCRC to help start health programs, demonstrations and introduction programs, and bring guest speakers who emphasizes fitness and health.

Bus access to the new Mid-County facility, which is located on Queens Guard Road off of Layhill Road, has been problematic. The Recreation Department has received State approval, directional signs for the site is now up on Layhill Road, and work is underway to determine where the *Ride On* bus will stop.

There are two types of senior recreation centers: 1) large senior centers that serve a great number of seniors and 2) nine Neighborhood Recreation Centers where senior programs are scheduled along with programs for other groups.

There are 34 facilities County wide, including four indoor aquatic centers, six outdoor pools, and Community and Neighborhood Recreation Centers. There are three stand-alone senior centers: Holiday Park Senior Center, Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, and Damascus Senior Center. Longbranch Senior Center operates on the second floor of the Longbranch Community Center. You can find additional information in the Fall Recreation Guide www.montgomerycountymd.gov/rec.

Vital Living Committee– Leslie Marks

The Vital Living Committee (VLC) is focusing on senior employment. The VLC has been instrumental in gaining AARP recognition that the AARP should be participating in Montgomery County. AARP has a senior employment program. The VLC is considering partnering with AARP along with JCA's Employment Program, to make it an ongoing, year-long program.

The VLC continues to publish and update the *Navigator*, which includes information for people "50 Plus" on resources available in the community. It also has worked with many libraries to create a corner for information of interest for seniors.

Finally, the VLC is reviewing its mission statement and is especially interested in reaching out and collaborating with other organizations to advocate for senior issues.

Odile Saddi

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging has indicated that for Federal fiscal year 2012, flat funding is expected for the Older American Act funded services.

The Maryland Department of Aging received a small grant from the Federal Government targeting Fraud Prevention for seniors; a related seminar will be held on October 5 in a joint project with Prince George's County.

A public forum is to be held on October 19th, at 6:00 p.m. at the Children Resource Center, where the Director of HHS will receive testimony about priorities for next year's budget.

Recently there was a Hunger Summit in Montgomery County focusing on faith organizations. One HHS staff person attended and reported that there was a great deal of interest in senior issues from faith communities.

The Medicare Part D Prescription enrollment starts early this year on October 15th and closes early on December 7th.

The National Council on Aging has a post-card Campaign for Congress that urges people to write a brief story about senior hardships, "One Paycheck from _____" and mail it to Congress. Free cards were distributed.

The Aging and Disability Senior Nutrition Congregate Program is changing to swipe cards for its meals program. Starting in November, there will be a practice period before it goes into effect to ensure reliable accountability and reporting.

Unfortunately, Aging and Disability did not receive a small grant (\$10,000) for health promotion activities for which it had applied in partnership with hospitals, Easter Seal, and OASIS.

Odile attended a meeting with Mr. Leggett and other County Managers that focused on County diversity. Mr. Leggett wants to initiate a "Diversity Summit" this winter. She reported that:

- One-third of all small businesses in the County are minority.
- Of the small business, 95% have fewer than 50 employees; two-thirds have fewer than five employees.
- Only 3% of the businesses belong to any Chamber of Commerce.
- In 2009, 6.8% of Montgomery County citizens lived below the poverty line. This is higher than the average in the State of Maryland.
- Thirty-seven per cent of homeowners spent more than 30% of their income for housing.
- Forty-four per cent of renters paid more than 20% of their income for housing.
- Montgomery County has the highest rate of tuberculosis in Maryland.

OTHER

- On September 22, 2011, the Washington Post reported on reductions in annual incomes in both Montgomery and Fairfax Counties

- On December 12, 2011, Representative Van Hollen will be a guest speaker at the Holiday Park Senior Center, an event organized by Older Women's League (OWL). OWL's Sarah Gotbaum will provide further details.
- Montgomery County's Community Services Day will be on October 16.
- The Senior Expo at White Flint will be held on Sunday, November 6th from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m.
- The City of Gaithersburg will host the Montgomery County "Homeless Resource Day" on October 19th at the Bohrer Park Activity Center. The County Council is undertaking a periodic effort to review the 88 County Citizens Advisory Groups (Commission, Committees and Boards).

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Marcia Pruzan, Secretary